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ARTICLES:

- (1) Japan to legislate against nuclear terrorism during current Diet session in order to cooperate with the international treaty to punish possession and production of radioactive materials

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
Eve., February 26, 2007

The government this morning decided to present to the current Diet session a "bill to punish acts releasing radiation" (tentative

name), a domestic law needed in order for Japan to ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism -- which is intended to prevent nuclear terrorism. The government intends to enact the bill during the current session. Possession of radioactive materials and production of radioactive devices to be used for acts of terror, including the stage prior to carrying out the terrorist act, would be for the first time subject to criminal punishment. The bill will also tighten the penalties to be imposed on the act of releasing radioactive substances.

There are no laws at present other than the Law on the Control of Nuclear Reactors, Etc., and the Law on Prevention of Radiation Damage that provide for punishments against acts of releasing radioactive substances. But these two laws are essentially aimed at forcing electric power companies with nuclear power plants and medical service workers to carefully handle radioactive materials. The laws do not assume cases of terrorism using radioactive materials.

The bills will newly regulate the possession of radioactive materials, as well as the manufacturing and possession of devices to produce radioactive substances. The bill will make subject to punishment acts of blackmailing by pretending to possess nuclear materials.

The current maximum prison term of 10 years or less applicable to acts of releasing radioactive materials will be extended to life imprisonment similar to the Chemical Weapons Ban Law and the Sarin Gas Prevention Law.

Russia introduced in 1998 the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism out of concern for the

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outflow of nuclear weapons and nuclear materials. The convention was unanimously adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in April 2005. Prime Minister Koizumi signed the convention in September of that year. However, the number of countries that have ratified the convention as of Feb. 1 of this year only totals 13, short of the 22 countries necessary for the convention to come into effect. Of the eight major industrialized democracies (G-8), only Russia has ratified it.

The above convention is the 13th international treaty regulating acts of terrorism. Japan has ratified 12 other treaties that have already gone into effect.

(2) China approaches Japanese companies for technical support for high-speed railway project

NIHON KEIZAI (Top Play) (Slightly abridged)
February 26, 2007

The Chinese government has unofficially asked Japanese railroad coach manufacturers and railway companies for technical support for a project to construct a high-speed train route between Harbin and Dalian in Heilungkiang Province in northeastern China. In Harbin and Dalian, the temperature in the winter drops to minus 40 degrees. Given this, China needs to acquire technical know-how from overseas to ensure high-speed driving safety even in freezing temperatures. The companies approached by China have begun to look into the possibility of technical development. China appears to be focusing on Japan's Shinkansen or bullet train technology. Japanese companies, if they are able to prove the superiority of their technologies, might be able to receive orders for a large-scale railway project for the first time in China.

According to informed sources, the Chinese Ministry of Railways has sounded out Japanese manufacturers, such as Kawasaki Heavy Industries and Hitachi, as well as East Japan Railway Company, for technical assistance. Beijing has revealed that it plans to develop such key routes as one between Beijing and Shanghai on its own, but it has yet to develop enough technology to operate high-speed trains in extremely cold temperatures. Beijing reportedly has also made similar approaches to European and American companies.

The about 950-kilometer route between Harbin and Dalian will be newly established, but the South Manchuria Railway Company had also offered services on the same route. China plans to operate trains at a speed of 300 kilometers an hour, the same speed as the Shinkansen bullet train. In northeastern China, technologies are necessary to operate trains even in minus 50-degree temperatures. Japan has already established technology for bullet trains to be able to run in up to minus 25-degree temperatures.

The Chinese government plans to build a high-speed passenger railway network covering 7,000 kilometers by 2010 or so. It intends to construct new routes, including one between Beijing and Shanghai (about 1,300 kilometers) and another between Beijing and Guangzhou (about 2,000 kilometers). China is also pushing ahead with a plan to operate on existing lines high-speed vehicles capable of running at a speed of more than 200 kilometers an hour. In China, a high-speed train modeled after the Japanese Tohoku Shinkansen bullet train "Hayate" initiated commercial service in January.

The Japanese companies concerned had initially anticipated several trillion yen worth of a project in China to transfer Shinkansen

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technology, similar to the project carried out in Taiwan.

China, though, has announced it would independently develop technologies and vehicles for the key routes between Beijing and Shanghai and between Beijing and Guangzhou. For these routes, China is expected to order about 200 cars (eight cars for one train) to foreign companies, including six Japanese companies such as Kawasaki and Hitachi, Siemens of Germany, Alstom of France, and Bombardier of Canada. For these routes, local companies are likely to be in charge of production, based on foreign companies' technologies. Japanese companies expect to receive orders worth several tens of billions of yen mainly for the transfer of technologies.

Due to technical difficulties, contracts for a project to construct the route between Harbin and Dalian may go to Japanese companies should China finds independent technology development difficult.

(3) Jiryu jiron (Opinion) column by Hitoshi Tanaka: The beginning of the end of North Korea problem?

ASAHI (Page 9) (Almost full)
February 26, 2007

Around the time when the six-party talks in Beijing reached agreement on Feb. 13 on North Korea's nuclear programs, I was traveling first to London and then to San Francisco. I attended as a speaker international symposiums on the North Korea issue held in the two cities, one hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London and the other by the Asia Society in San Francisco.

I told audiences at both symposiums that the recent six-party accord reached in Beijing should be taken as an important step in the right direction, but that we also must properly reaffirm what the fundamental principles are in order to resolve the North Korean problem.

First, we must not repeat the same mistake we made in the past. As early as 1989, signs of nuclear activities by the North came to light, but the international community in the end failed to prevent Pyongyang from conducting a nuclear test. The reason is because the United States, Japan, and other concerned countries lacked consistency in their policies toward North Korea, allowing it to take advantage of them, even though no doubt the fault ultimately lies with North Korea. Moreover, there was a lack of cooperation among the countries concerned. The countries involved needed to have policy consistency and firm unity if they were to succeed.

Second, the nuclear deterrent theory that the use of nuclear weapons would only invite massive nuclear retaliation cannot be applied to North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Given past behavior by that country, it is unlikely that North Korea would make the appropriate decision during a highly tense situation. I conclude thus that

getting the North to scrap all of its nuclear weapons and programs enabling it to manufacture nuclear weapons is absolutely essential.

Third, the issues must be resolved comprehensively. In order to get Pyongyang to eliminate all of its nuclear programs, it will be necessary to provide it with such incentives as economic cooperation and security assurances. The premise for such would be the normalization of relations and the resolution of such pending issues as abductions.

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Fourth, I must stress that the abduction issue, regrettably, cannot be resolved overnight. A rocky road toward resolution will likely continue in the future, but I think the important factor is for six-party talks to serve as a framework to monitor the implementation of the agreement by using a variety of leverages.

These views that I presented at the conferences were met with arguments both for and against them. For example, one participant argued that the nuclear deterrent theory would function. Another person said a second and third nuclear blast by North Korea would be useless and meaningless. Others stressed the importance of halting further nuclear development and preventing nuclear proliferation to third parties. There were a few who stated that Japan, having over-emphasized the abduction issue, might be isolated or ignored by the other parties. There also was deep-rooted skepticism that the latest Beijing accord was no more than a rehash of the 1994 Agreed Framework between the US and North Korea, and so was of little significance.

I said in my speech that the abduction issue was unlikely to be resolved without resolving the nuclear issue or vice versa. I said the North's nuclear programs and abductions of Japanese nationals stemmed from the same policy. So, what is needed is the North's strategic determination to resolve the abduction issue. What is simply needed is a system to closely monitor implementation of the agreement. The 1994 Agreed Framework did not have such a system, but the six-party talks could serve as such an arrangement.

Also at the symposium in San Francisco was former US Secretary of Defense William Perry, who has lengthy experience in North Korean affairs, and my friend South Korean Ambassador to the US Lee Tae Sik. I think all of us shared the view of how difficult it would be to resolve the North Korea problem and how large the cost would be if the effort ended in failure. Perry in particular stressed the need for the US government to seriously tackle the problem, openly revealing his irritation at the response Washington response had taken prior to the recent Beijing accord.

I think we are seeing the beginning of the end of the North Korea problem. Given the international community's deep distrust of that country, it will not be easy to resolve the issues. But should the North violate the recent six-party accord, the international community would unite and take tough measures against it. With regional security, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the stability of the international community in mind, Japan, too, must settle down to addressing the issue writ large.

Hitoshi Tanaka: Born in 1947; after serving in such posts as the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau and the deputy foreign minister, works as a senior fellow at the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) and also as a guest professor at the University of Tokyo.

(4) Editorial: How will Japan, US respond to new Armitage report calling for cooperation with China?

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
February 26, 2007

An American bipartisan group who include former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye has just released a report titled, "The US-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia right Through 2020." The report offers advice

on how to meld a rising China and India into the cooperative framework of Asia, centering on the Japan-US alliance.

In 2000, the same group of experts produced the so-called Armitage Report, which served as the blueprint for the Japan and Asia strategy of the Bush administration that was launched in 2001. The new report can be identified as the revised edition of the Armitage Report.

The new report identifies close cooperation between Japan and the United States as the cornerstone of an Asia strategy, as was the case with the first Armitage Report. The overall tone toward China has subtly changed, however.

The latest report lists three scenarios Japan and the United States must avoid: (1) unilateral control of Asia by the United States; (2) a US-China joint control concept; and (3) conflict between the Japan-US alliance and China.

It is no longer possible for the United States alone to be the sole policeman in Asia where major powers are rising and energy security and nationalism are emerging as issues. Joint control by the United States and China also seems impossible, given the huge gap between the two countries over such values as democracy, freedom, and human rights. Any clash between the Japan-US alliance and China or the road toward rivalry would only force other countries in Asia to make foolish choices. That would not help China head in a positive direction, either.

The best option would be for Japan and the United States to guide China toward a desirable direction, while making efforts to spread democratic values across the region. To that end, it is essential for Japan, the United States, and China to forge friendly and cooperative relations.

The international environment surrounding Asia has significantly changed over the last seven years. When the first Armitage Report first came out, Japan, the United States, and China were tense over the issues of Taiwan and sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. Moving then to deepen the Japan-US alliance could have been taken as an attempt to tighten the noose around China.

China today is accepting the role of a "responsible stakeholder" through the six-party talks and other venues. Japan also has decided to aim at a strategic relationship with China.

China's future remains unclear, and its defense spending and national policy lack transparency, as well. Still, Japan is urged to expand areas of cooperation with China for the common cause of stability and prosperity in Asia.

If Japan and the United States wish to avoid being isolated in the region, they must not excessively adhere to the bilateral nature of the alliance. The two countries must seek cooperation with India, Australia, Vietnam, and other countries through talks, while endeavoring to engage China in their efforts. The new edition of the Armitage Report paints such a vision.

The report aims at depicting an unwavering strategy toward Japan and policy toward Asia regardless of which candidate, Republican or Democratic, wins the US presidential race in 2008. How will Japan respond to the proposals by the bipartisan American group? Japan needs to broaden its perspective and boost its policymaking

capability.

(5) Editorial: US force realignment legislation unfair to Okinawa

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
February 26, 2007

A bill has been submitted to the Diet to extend subsidies to local

governments depending on how far they have cooperated with realignment plans for the US military.

The aim is to advance the US force realignment plan, as was agreed upon by the Japanese and US governments. The legislation particularly seems to reflect the government's determination to win over strongly resisting Okinawa municipalities to its side.

But will the incentive-award system work? It might end up rubbing the sentiments of Okinawa residents the wrong way.

What worries us is not the high-handed approach alone. Extending hefty financial assistance only to base-accepting municipalities is unfair to other areas.

The government's packages of economic incentives have aimed at reducing economic disparities between mainland Japan and all of Okinawa. The government is about to make changes to such a system.

The incentive award system resulted from the government's bitter lesson from a plan to relocate Futenma Air Station to waters off Nago. Although the government has provided Okinawa, centering on Nago, with generous packages of economic incentives, the relocation plan has not moved forward.

The relocation site has shifted from offshore to the coastal area. The government is apparently determined not to allow any local municipalities to "eat and run." Under the proposed legislation, the subsidies will be provided to host municipalities in four stages of the realignment work: acceptance of a government plan; the start of an environmental assessment; the start of construction work; and the completion of the project.

There are factors other than the local circumstances that can explain why the plan to relocate the Futenma airfield to waters off Nago has not advanced. For example, the government has acted as if relocating Futenma Air Station to a site within Okinawa was a done deal, and that has revived the anti-base movement.

Another unique feature of the envisaged legislation is that the Defense Ministry would be allowed to determine economic incentives. Under the new system, the acceptance to bases would be directly linked to economic incentives. It would be distinct from the existing system to extend subsidies to municipalities already hosting bases.

After Okinawa was returned to Japan, the now defunct Okinawa Development Agency was responsible for mapping out economic packages to the prefecture under the Okinawa Promotion and Development Special Measures Law. An office in the Cabinet Office is now responsible for the job. Given the government's tight financial situation, it would be natural to think that force realignment subsidies would take a toll on traditional packages of economic incentives.

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The law is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2012. If the law ceased to exist, Japan would be armed itself only with the US force realignment legislation that would be good until March 31, 2017.

The envisaged US force realignment legislation has incorporated a special system allowing the government to provide municipalities shouldering a substantial burden from an additional base with greater subsidies for public works projects.

In the eyes of Okinawa, there are many areas that merit government assistance. Regardless of such local circumstances, the government is planning a system to extend inappropriate subsidies only to those municipalities that would accept bases. The system might prompt the coffers of some municipalities to run dry, while those of some other municipalities to become bloated.

It has been 35 years since Okinawa was returned to Japan. The government's packages of incentives to Okinawa, along with US force realignment, are at a crossroads. We are worried where they are

headed.

(6) Editorial: Japan should make efforts to resolve the Iran nuclear issue

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
February 24, 2007

With Iran repeatedly conducting large-scale military exercises, the US and European media are reporting that the US military is now drafting a plan to strike that country. Amid signs looming of future US air strikes, the deadline for Iran to halt its uranium enrichment activity, which the United Nations Security Council set, has expired. On Dec. 23 last year, the UNSC adopted unanimously a resolution calling on Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program within 60 days. It is regrettable that Iran did not comply with that dictum.

According to a report that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) submitted to the UNSC, Iran has expanded its nuclear enrichment activity instead of stopping it. The report notes that Iran has activated two cascades linked to 164 centrifugal separators, and that it will increase the number of centrifugal machines to 3,000 by May.

The UNSC, therefore, has no choice but to consider additional sanction measures against Teheran. The present UN sanctions on Iran adopted based on Article 41 of the UN Chapter 7 are only ritual measures such as vigilance against overseas travel by individuals and organizations involved in nuclear weapons development, as well as a freeze on financial assets overseas. The United States and Britain, which have taken a hard-line stance against Iran, and China, which is cautious about the further strengthening of UN sanctions, will likely engage in a tug-of-war at the UNSC over the issue of where to go next on Iran.

We ask the countries concerned to refrain from words and actions that would unnecessarily inflame tensions. According to media reports, should Iran's nuclear weapons development be confirmed or should Iran's direct involvement in attacks on US forces in Iraq be discovered, US forces would launch attacks on Iran's military and nuclear facilities. Israel, a US ally, is rumored to be readying to launch air strikes on Iran. There is precedent for in 1981, Israel bombed a nuclear plant in Iraq.

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Of course, concerned parties have yet to confirm their conjectures. This might be either a threat or a constraint. The Iranian nuclear issue should be resolved in the UNSC. Otherwise the issue will become overly complicated. Iran should stop its provocative activities, including military exercises. Both sides must avoid foolish actions that would pit them against each other in a battle of wills.

To that end, not only self-restraint by the concerned parties but also extra efforts by countries involved are necessary. As one US research group on Iraq advocated, it is essential for Washington and Teheran to hold a dialogue. Negotiations with Iran under the framework of the five UNSC members and Germany should be continued.

It is also important for Japan to contribute to the international framework. China has played the leading role in the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear programs. The focus will be on how China and Russia will deal with the Iran issue. Since Japan has long had friendly relations with Iran, there must be a scenario in which the Japanese government can actively participate in helping find a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

The ultimate goal is not to allow either North Korea or Iran to possess nuclear weapons. It is not science fiction that the North might be able to miniaturize nuclear bombs and load them into missiles targeted at Japan. Considering the actual situation where the North Korean and Iraqi nuclear issues delicately affect each other, Japan could aim at becoming the key player calling for denuclearization in both regions. Such an idea might meet Prime

Minister Shinzo Abe's advocate "assertive diplomacy" aimed to contribute to Asia and the world.

DONOVAN